Use this guide to talk to anyone in your life who is not yet part of the Jewish movement in support of refugees. Consider reaching out to someone who has expressed concern about welcoming refugees to the United States or even someone who has made disparaging remarks.

We can be advocates for refugees not only through our political activism but also in our closest relationships. Take a few minutes to listen to another person’s perspective, provide basic facts about the global refugee crisis, address hate speech, and talk about the issue in a Jewish context. We hope that these conversations will prompt some people to take action or simply begin to view refugees differently.

Welcoming the stranger is both an American and Jewish value. The United States was founded to provide freedom and safety to the persecuted. Helping refugees sets an example for the nations of the world to follow. Welcoming the stranger is also a core Jewish value. Turn the page for more information about Jewish values and history to use in conversation.
WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT THIS AS A JEW?
The Jewish people has been a refugee people since biblical times. In the United States, we know the devastating consequences of turning away refugees. Less than a century ago, refugees fleeing the Holocaust were marked as security threats to the U.S., denied entry, and sent back to Europe to be brutally murdered. Furthermore, the value of welcoming, protecting, and loving the stranger appears in the Torah 36 times according to the Talmud – more than any other value.

ARE REFUGEES A SECURITY THREAT?
Refugees who arrive through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) are the most thoroughly vetted people to come to the United States. Prior to approving a refugee for resettlement in the United States, U.S. intelligence and security agencies conduct multiple security checks that take, on average, two years to complete. Before a refugee can arrive through the USRAP, a specially trained staff person from the Department of Homeland Security conducts an in-person interview to make sure that there are no indicators of fraud. The USRAP’s security checks have proven to be successful. Not one resettled refugee in the U.S. has committed a lethal terrorist attack on U.S. soil.

WHY DOES THE UNITED STATES NEED TO WELCOME REFUGEES? CAN’T OTHER COUNTRIES DO IT?
85% of the world’s refugees live in low or middle income countries while they wait to either return to their home countries, integrate into the country to which they fled, or, for less than 1%, find safety in a resettlement country. Including the U.S., there are now more than 30 resettlement countries around the world.

AREN’T REFUGEES A DRAIN ON OUR ECONOMY? WHO IS GOING TO PAY FOR HELPING THEM?
Refugees pay taxes, get jobs, and start businesses. Entrepreneurship is almost 50% higher among refugees than U.S. born populations. In addition, an unpublished federal Department of Health and Human Services report found that refugees contributed $65 billion in revenue to the U.S. economy over the last decade.¹

BUT AREN’T MANY OF THESE REFUGEES ANTI-SEMITIC?
Many refugees arriving in the United States have never met Jews before. The welcome they receive from Jewish organizations, individuals, and congregations combats anti-Semitism that may exist, breaks down their assumptions, and helps them more quickly become part of the diverse fabric of this country. Additionally, all refugees resettled in the U.S. receive mandatory cultural orientation helping them embrace their new multi-faith, multi-ethnic nation. Finally, we should not be a people who withhold refuge based on religion.